



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 278:**  
*"Act Concerning Truancy"*

**Maria D. Lamb – Program Director, Family Support Center, Bridgeport**

**March 1, 2010**

My name is Maria Lamb. I have been the program director for the Family Support Center in Bridgeport, CT since 2008.

The Family Support Center (FSC) is a multi-service "one-stop" community-based program for FWSN-referred children assessed as high risk and in need of intensive services. Public Act 07-4 requires that every juvenile court, after assessment by a probation officer, divert children and families assessed as high risk/needs to a Family Support Center. The purpose of the is to determine appropriate services and/or treatment needs for children and families who exhibit behaviors that require an immediate response and offer access to appropriate and effective services and interventions.

FSC is a voluntary that provides services to the child and their families. Some of the services available to families include but are not limited to case management, 24-hour crisis intervention, family mediation and therapy, psycho-educational groups, respite care, etc.

One of the functions of the FSC is to provide assistance and support to truant students and their families through an educational advocacy program. As program director at the FSC, I have first-hand knowledge and experience from both the administrative and clinical perspective, regarding the need for Bill 278 to be passed, which establishes a FWSN filing timeline.

In the 2008/2009 fiscal year, the Bridgeport FSC received a total of 112 truancy referrals. Out of these 112 referrals, 73 were submitted between March and June. This directly affects the assistance we can provide truant clients and their families. If we receive referrals earlier in the year, we can work collaboratively with the family and the school in order to address the causes of the truant behavior and provide the student with a chance to attain success in that academic year.

The goal of the FSC is to assist clients and their families attain academic success. I have no doubt that this too is the main objective of the Connecticut school systems. I believe that passing this bill will allow the local schools and the community agencies that deal with truancy cases (i.e. FSC) a better opportunity to assist truant adolescents. I also believe that earlier intervention will allow us to have a greater chance for success with this population.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this matter.